

BLACK SUN

POEMS

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Love I love
But now I am only
Love's echo
I listen and

Hear myself fade
To where I will
No longer be
Heard

The sound
Of your voice
Will be what
I hear in the silence

You were my death
And my love
The shadow-form
Left to me here

Love's candle
Was placed on my tongue
Love's flame
Was lit in my mouth

Now hot wax
To seal up my eyes
Now only your lingering
Tresses of smoke

Love's hour I tore
Love's tongue I
Bit off
For a while it babbled

Speaking within me
But now the leaves fall
My leaves whither and fall
I lie here

And wait for my death

Yours was the face
I loved
Your eyes were the eyes
Your voice the voice

How to forget them
Now that they're mine
In dark rooms
Exchanges are made

And none comes intact
Through the mirror-realm

In the dim
Amber darkness
Two moths twined
On the same string
Of light

Shivering in the
Updraft of the flame
Around and around
A helix of ascent

Toward the moment
Of blindness
The wax droplets
Of fire

The flash-bulb
Of Now

What can I do for you
My love open
And tell me open
And let me in

These are my hands
These these my eyes
This is my face and this
Is my body only this

What can I do
For you my love when
Nothing suffices
Nothing that I do or am

This candle
In a darkened room
White point the darkness
Slides around

A hand's shadow
On the ceiling edges
Nearer the bright
Region

And then
A pale petal orange
Between the blinds
Of fingers

The dark
Is settling now
With its candle smoke
And silence

Immensity
Illuminates
A square yard
Of blinds

Serrated edges
Of purple
Then brightening slits
Expanding day

And light flows
Through
Like the ocean
Through open gills

Most recessed
Secret place
Moss soft
Damp leaves

Earth scent
And the gills
Dark underfolds
Rain-beads

Rhythm quickening
Deepening,
Spatter
Of ocean spray

Fragrant
Scummed sands
Of an
Exhausted face

Cauterized wounds
Down from which
Blood still flows
Nail on nail

Blood drips down
Diamonds on
White skin, skin
White as playing cards

The deck of the body
Shuffled reshuffled
Row crossing row
Crucifixion arrangement

By holy chance
Gathered dispersed
Dealt and redealt
Blow follows blow

The scourging of whips
The cat deals nine hands
The body is a table
Of rules the living game

Slowly my eyes close
On the tedious gestures
For a while the gamble
Will continue without me

Blind my eyes
Now O love
Since you have
Brought me death

Shut my ears
Now O passion
I must hear
Only silence

No longer to see
The rose
Dark in its
Folded light

No longer to hear
The wind outside
No longer to feel
Its touch when it blows

Drawn to the candle
Where my eye was fixed
I can't help but
Wonder what I felt

What was
That moment
Mind and breath
And body my whole self

Gathered to an apex
The flame-point of life
The candle in memory
Momentarily a burning

Momentarily the cone
And corridor
Of a radiance
I think

What
Was it for
Since it happened
Only once

A sun has darkened
In my life somewhere
Like a cataracted eye
Or like an eclipse

I feel the strangeness
Now in the air
There's a terrible outline
Around everything

In day of night
I cannot hear my voice
Though it is speaking
In my own ear

Tear drops of flame
Drop from the eye of wax
The melted pool
Is eyeless blind

In day of night
I cannot see the hand
Making its furrows
Beneath my hair

Is it my voice
I'm hearing
Is it my hand
That's there

I am the truth
And I am the life
This somewhere
Was written said

Yet I am falsehood
Now and death
Since it invades
Me and my dream

Night of day
And what I was
Has descended with
The darkened sun

Into darkness
Greater than night
My eyes have gone
Down into blindness

My bones into
Brokenness down
In the depths
Of me

Soon to go down
Deeper still
There where my hand
Will no longer be

My hand
But another thing
Black sun has brought me
Here to the darkened land

Inside the rose
There is light
Folded and folded
Radiance returning

Upon itself
Darkness and light
Intersecting
And knotted

Fold upon fold
Intricacies
Defeat of the pondering
Eye and heart

Always the petals
Are gathered far deeper
Than they appear to be
Dark reclusive art

Far inside roses
There is all darkness
Light there is folded
Ply upon ply

O gazing
I cannot help but feel
That I would go there
Go there go there

Although I die

The word must come
Out from
The silent place
That which no voice

Can say
It is and says
Silently
In unspoken thought

This is my written life

Somewhere
Clarte Luxe
Calme
L'isle joyeuse

Clarity and Grace
Calm
The Joyous Island

Clarte Luxe
Calme
L'isle joyeuse

Clarity grace
and calm

The joyous isle

Never the real
The actual given name
Rather the counterfeit
Name upon name

Given in dream
My true self
And so reserved
For the night trial

Reserved for
The desolate
Places of the earth
For my travels

Far into
The desert
Identity reality
Known only there

Where the light darkens
There at the hill's edge
Red below yellow
At the end of day

In me a similar
Threshold opens
Outward and outward
To a dark descent

My footsteps
Are walking
The dream dust road
Blue ash of moonlight

Ivory of moon
Burning and full above
O tell me and tell me
Of all the ways of love

How many footsteps
Have walked on the dust road
Twisted the ways of love
Traced in the dust

How many others
Here in the empty place
So pale the hands
Held out before my face

Day within day
Within night
Within night
Layer on layer

Of translucent time
The coats of an onion's
Web-like skin
The woven life

Not easily shed
Not easily seen through
Ply upon ply
Not easily cut through

Tears come at last
You think why
Why must this
Happen why

Where the night wind
Speaks its syllables
I have stood by
To listen

Hearing it speak
Hypnotically
What cannot be spoken
But only heard

Standing nearing
With every step
The invisible edge
Of star-filled skies

I listen closely
Bold and ecstatic
Secretly
Patiently

Trying to say
Each word

Explain to me
O passion the
Darkness held deep
In the white rose's breast

Where my thoughts
Cannot dwell
Lost in the whirlpool
Tumbled in white vertigo

Which my words
Cannot leave
Trapped in a
Silken silence

Emptying toward
Causeless bliss
Heated
The knot of sand

That I am
The sand-nothing
Gathered compact
And dense

Combined with some
Few things
Shards of reflection
Spicules of dream

Heated baked
Until
Totally solid
Now I undo it

If only in mind
And yet there
Sand back to
Sand as though

Stream into stream
Less than pebbles now
Through fingers
Like water unheld

Like fingers
Of bone
That are
Crumbled to chalk bits

White dust
To white dust
At the edge
Of the moon

Thinking
Toward bliss
In the moon's
Tranquil seas

In the street
Before daybreak
There's a voice
Before car sounds

It's a very soft
Woman's voice
A young mother's voice
Calling

Whose name, whose
Is it she keeps saying?
How will they tell her
He no longer exists

The moonlight falls
Through the open blinds
And my heart breaks
At the scent of the wind

Blue green moonlight
Casts a tilted
Square on the floor
Shadow-branches

Are veins
In its marble
A portal of light
Mausoleum facade

And the window a door
But where is it
Leading to
Where O where

And I
Say farewell
To the scent of
The night air

As my breath stirs
In the room
There are stars
Falling far beyond

When my eyes
Close in the dark
They pour
Furies of light

But it is far
So infinitely far
Only these
Smallest drops

Will reach us here

As my hand
Raised in the dark
Is held out
In the void

So my voice
Silently
Is raised
In the silence

I am
The lord of caves
Here in
My empty room

Here there is
Infinite
Darkness
Space

Here there is
Unmeasured
Waiting
Time

Here there is
A match
And a
Candle lit

O morning
And the day
Is enormous
With sun and
The room so bright

I come to the window
Light
Fills my hands
My face my eyes

The shadow of night
Is cleared
From my brow
I open toward light

Now I see beyond
Darkness and
I feel
Beyond sight

Day comes and is
A fire beyond,
Blind-iris
Is opened slowly

Bars stream in
Dust smolders
In the smoky
Vitreous emptiness

The room's
Huge space

O morning
And the day
Outside is tensed
With new light

And the room
Is striped
Like a tiger,
Blinds' wavey stripes --

An aquarium fish
In liquid light
Whose eye is searching for
Something to kill

Exultation
Stands
Improbable part
Of death

Light light
Light feeling
Feeling
Impossible to share

Light Glory Light
Of selfhood
Beholding
The world

I go to the window
And bring down
The blinds
Draw-string
Of evening

It entangles
My wrist
Web-thread
As though of an iris
Contracting

Closing around
The dark pupil
And the prey
That I am

I grow dimmer
A small
Spot at the center
Of dimness

In the evening
The shadows
Gather
Around me

But how many
Shadows
Gather
Within

The watchers
Are watching always
Always
Preparing

The place for
You
In the
Other realm

Counterpart
World
Unlike this
Unlike this one

Hidden somewhere

In my palm
There are lines
The creases
The tracings

The shadows of life

Crossings
And etchings
Like the veins
Of dead leaves

Like the tea
On the floor
Of a puddle
Gold-veined leavings

Prefigurations

How many shadows
Appear in your life
Seas oceans
Of powers circulate

Seas oceans
Of silence
Oceans with voices
Seas of unknown lives

Many-bandaged the wounds
And yet blood flows
Drips on the paper
Eyes of the moth's wing

Night faring
Moth wings
Of blood drops
Unimaginably pure

Filled with
The blackness
Of holiest
Random night

Of the nectar
Of night's flowers
The moth's
Only food

Yes one day
I will gather
Them all back
To myself

Drink my own
Blood streamings
Chalice on chalice
Drop after drop

Disappearing
Then
Point by point
Into the forest-night

Like the jaguar
Invisible
Wearing both its
And the night's spots

The scent of
Rotting leaves
Impossible
To say

My whole
Heart
Recollection strains
And grieves

O why
Has this
Come to me
My arms my hands

My body
My only face
My memory
Confused faint

Traces of my days

I am infused
With the night
Soaked in it
Up to my

Eye-socket pools
Globular darkness
Lodged in the skull
Four-dimensional

Vortices
For light
Where all of light's
Drawn in

Light hunger
Immeasurable
Where I swallow
Light's semen

So deep down
My eyes' throat
Worlds of light
Insufficient

For these two
Black holes

Alone now
In bed
The late quiet
Of the night

A meditative
Sphere
Or bubble in time
Appearing here

Now along the
Surfaces of space
Itself
A bubble

A geodesic dome
Of surfaces
Percolated
Out along

The roots
And branches
Of an infinitely
Branching tree

Universe on universe
World on world
On world
Time upon time

I listen
Hear
The tiny world
Grow still

And cease
Like a very distant
Small door
Shutting

As in the hour's glass
Whose
Precious precious
Hoard of golden sand

Is crumbled
Pinch by pinch

PART TWO

Yet a leaf
Cool and green
Is placed
On each eye

Leaf on leaf
With their clear
And cool
Beads of rain

Fallen from
Another life

Autumn
Wind-light
Blowing gently floating
The gold leaves

Disheveled
Blown-about hair
Of autumn I lie
In the field

The tall trees
Circle leaning inward
Above me
I the hub

And my arms and legs
Spokes and
Leaves flutter down
Onto my brow

Onto my hair
That's mingled with grass
Onto my chest
Onto the heel

Of my palm
A dry leaf stem
Taps
My wrist

Dreaming
My head is a bag full
Of dry leaves
And hay

Warm warm day
I am soaked
In the sun-warmth
Like a teabag in tea

Scent of roses
Yellow roses
Present here
In the mirrored room

In the mirror
Dresser and table
Stand inside their
Pool of moonlight

Silence and
The moonlight's rain
Pours in through
The open window

In the mirrored room's
Reflection late
Somewhere the
Unearthly night

A being
Which does not exist
May yet
Be described

Drawn
In the sand
The crossing
Lines

And then
The dissatisfied hand
Or the wind
Or the sole of a foot

Wipes the slate

In the interval
There
Between figure
And sand

In the grey
Disturbed surface
Of sand grains
An image

Emerges or
Almost emerges

Deep and
Ancestral the book
Of dreams
Pages unreeling

Frame after frame
Blank pages
Of moonstone, light's
Infinite leaves

Matte black
Ultraviolet texts
Of shadow-branches
Turned and turned

I feel someone
Inside of me
Looking and looking
For someone else

Place of no place
Moon-flash through the trees
And tied to my heart
A lung-sack of shadows

Exhaled out
Out and out
To the still silent
Star-pricked night

The roadstrip of tin
Down through which
My feet move
Has black spots

And splotchings
Of shadows huge
Tattered lace rust spots
There are light-globes in blue leaves

Place of no place
O moon hungry in the trees
I hear your open mouth
Whistling whistling

And once
I had
Life in the
Palm of my hand

Pressed my
Hand to the ground
And the grass
Left these lines

How long
Will they last there
Forever perhaps
Forever forever

Drops
Of quicksilver
Lost in the sand
My eyes

My panther
My jaguar
My night-forest lair
Twisted soaked sheets

My radiant
Provocations
My allure
My secrecy and thought

A chart papers and forms

Space
Without space
Time
Time without without

The eye
The tongue
The voice's voices
Have gone down

There in the mine shaft
Of light
Buried far in
In the tangling

Of the eye-forest
Night-gathered
And outside
Where no one steps

There is perhaps
The sound of rain

Not I
Not the I
That I was this
No no more

It is another
Now a
Threshold passed
Now let my light

Darken
Flame flutter to a faint
Last bead
Halfway down the wick

And then
A mere aura
Then let my eyes
Be wax pools

Let the snuffed candle wick
Be my tongue

Far in the other realm
I am there
Almost there though
Trapped here

Where the other
The opaque counterpart
Still walks
Encounters things
Speaks

Remains silent
There the outline
The dry shell
Of my form

Has been hollowed
Translucent like
Isinglass
Paper stiff

Slowly
The ongoing transfer
From here out to there
Silent in secret

All that I have
Is poured out to
The other place
Into the other one

Slowly like anisette
Into a tiny glass

Light beyond light
There I would disappear
Lost in the other place
Beyond hearing or sight

There not the endless
Not perfection
Reunion
Inexpressible bliss

None of these
But the arrow of gold
Of desire of thought
Of intent

Flown beyond any
Thought or the world
Of intentions
Flown beyond even flight

Slag heap
Of the roof tops
Crossed and recrossed
By the night wind

The surface
Of treetops wavers
An anemone
Beneath the current

Clumped tree mold spores
And yes I came
Up to the roof's porch
To sit looking out

O night night
Night of no nightness
Moon of no moon
Earth of no earth

O the black
Mouth inside me
Marianas Trench
Will not reveal

More knife teeth
And jaw hinges tearing
Savage
And electric

The life
Beneath life
That I am
Yet this too illusion

Do not weep
For me mother
As a jaguar
I exist

As a panther
Of darkness
In the delta
Of the night

As a piranha
Of minute awareness
Precise and savage
In the Amazon of Now

The night's music sings
In the ear of time
Beige moth wings manic
Aurad street lights stand silent

Those inside the house
Are asleep
Those inside the night
Asleep but watching

Three cars
Are parked
Beside the dark
Apartment house

On the third floor
A window opens silently
Striped curtains flutter
There is no screen

A hand and then an arm
There for a second

O Madonna of dream
And desire
Here your
Choking salt tides

Have brought up
Garlands of seaweed
Oily kelp
Like film footage spilled

The paralyzing tiara
And cellophane gauzy
Veils
Of the medusa

O Madonna
Have mercy
I the piranha
The jaguar implore you

The leopard
Forsakes every spot
In his night-realm
The jaguar forsakes

The steel jaws
In his skull
The unseen heard splendor
And terror of his arrival

The piranha
Forsakes his
Bright razors
Dark waters

For you for you
Yes only for you

Deep within
Your darkest riches
Of velvet
Overflow

The damask rose
Deep within
And your perfume
Of myrrh and nostalgia

Of frankincense and musk
Is the unspeakable
Name of the One
I must ponder

Eternally
Here in hell

Woman of
More than flesh
Dark rose of velvet
Black silk

Leakage of blood
Rust stains
The immaculate canvas
Of your panties

With your mouthful
Of blood
With your
Mouth full of semen

You cannot speak
My name
The syllables
Can't escape from your throat

Passages where
Identity cannot be
Dark turnings where truth
Cannot come to light

I remember your
Biting teeth
Crinkled nipples
Your softest softest skin

I remember
The rose whirlpool
Of your
Swirling tongue

Hilarious elation

And the sadness
Of the garden
Just after
The evening rain

The green wood
My down-going
The route of sand
My home

The green wood
Leads me nowhere
The sand route
Goes through my heart

The routes I might
Have taken wander
All about the
Traces of my footsteps

The routes I
Might have taken
Call to me
From the dark

Mercurochrome
Of morning light
Is poured through
Tinted blinds

Shadow-blinds
Are a fan of light
Half open on
The bedroom's floor

What can I say
To bring this
Moment
To you?

The dark honey
Of steep light
Is poured
Through the oak trees

Moments later
One tree's
A photo negative
Black with

Sun-streamings behind
Eye-blink of time
O I can never say
What I most have to

Shiver of morning
Through the membrane
Of walls I feel
The city I feel

Sounds of activity
Come through
The blinds
Light is filled

With the sound
Of voices

What cannot
Be said
I must say
What cannot be spoken

Speak
However much fragment
The end
Of a cut branch

Is a tree root
Reaching deep in earth

Secrets yet unread
In the labyrinth
Of tree bark

In the Tarot
Of the moth's wing
Unspoken disclosures

My shadow sweeps
Over the grass
Long leg strips
Scissoring

The golden green
Of the autumn field
Burdock and weeds
Is all that I'm cutting

Yet I'm glad glad glad
To take it anyway

I remember
A house
By a crossroads
In the north

There are green fields
All around
There's an oak tree
And a screened porch

A red tractor
Out back
A man walking
Toward the barn

Light
Falls through
The blinds
Slicing my face

Someone else
Would see
A helix
A water-spout

Of spinning dust
Above my lips

The spreading light
Through the blinds' sieve
The annunciation
Of silence

A chorus of voices
Hidden so far
In the caverns
Of light beams

Now the feeling's
Around me
That I am not I
The I who is speaking

Not the I
Not myself
Not myself
Not another

A third one
Walks through me

Lying here
In the rain of dust
Of evening light
Through my window

Striped with Venetian blinds'
Tiger of sunset
Behold the Monarch wings
Of glowing orange curtains

It is said
If the dreamer
Dreams
Of himself asleep

He will wake
To find another
With his face
His voice his name

I slept and
Dreamed myself asleep
O what is my name
My real name

My real not
My mirror face
Having never heard
My voice

How would I ever
Know it

The blind eye
Of the moon
Has watched me
As I slept

I felt it
On my forehead
Like the coldest
Coldest sun

Now what am I to do
On what road
Down what leaf-green
Valley shall I run

Again and again
My love lies bleeding
Here in the arbor
He is crucified

Among white roses
I see his fair skin
Among red roses
His parted lips

Deeper in shadows
Of thorns and flowers
Than any has known
I see him there

Further in darkness
Beneath the shadows
I feel his torment
In the briar's sharp bones

Not for myself
But for all others
Here in the dark of night
I think and pray

It is not I alone
Who soon will go
Nor is it only they
But all

Back
Into its pure
Concept
The whole

Immensely opened world
Will close

I am so near
To what I will
Have to be
I am so near

That I can only
Think and pray
Everything done
Or said

Empty and full
At once
Nothing really special
And yet final eternal

My gesture
Is empty
My hands
Hold nothing

Returning love
To those who
Have given me
The rose of roses

From the eternal tree

O the lost roads
Along which
My steps are heard
Light of the sunset

Red so red
Tinted crossroads
Where shadows
And highway are tilted

Shadow and sign
Pointing
Opposite ways

Shadow and road sign
Like minute and
Hour hand
In late afternoon

Late earth-face clock

If the dead
Are ashes
The living
Are paper

Blood
Is the
Water-color
Of power

Now
In the time
Of echoing

Thought
Life
Always occur
Within film

Always within
Within

O how well
I must
Use up
My freedom

For how well
I know
It does not
Exist

In the amber
And orange sunlight
Tilting
Across the evening plain

Shadows lengthen
And lengthen
Gating
The crossroads

Shadow-webbing
Our syllables
Can never
Stitch through

Earliest sentences
Of night

In the dead
Language
That I speak
There are words

Still unspoken
Still uncoined
Undefined
And now

Who will know them?
In the dead
Language
That I speak

Now, lyrist
Go with tapers quenched
Into the night

Mystery
Must wait upon your step

Your ear will find
The brightest silences
Silver of moonlight
Falling
Through the leaves like dust

Gather a hand of shadows
In the strings of light

AFTERWORD

Encounters With the Author in Taipei

We first made the author's acquaintance at a well-known restaurant in Taipei, the Wysteria Tea House, famous as having been a meeting place for dissident intellectuals in the years of political struggle in Taiwan .

During the recent effort to publish his rather extensive work, we had occasion to discuss aspects of his past and current writing.

Your poetry is quite varied in style and in form. Where do you locate yourself in the overall debate concerning poetic form?

I consider myself an eclectic. The main thing for me is to grasp, mentally, a certain object -- that is, an experience, a scene, an event -- to see it and feel it. Any language that seems to convey the reality of that is good, any which remains merely language, merely words, is for me of no interest, in some cases it is actively negative, in the sense of being obstructive.

A cliché?

Yes or not even a cliché but in a way worse than that. Much of our language obscures the nature of reality. Words in themselves are, in a sense, the enemy of writing. I tell

students that all the time. Words most often merely convey the usual accepted social understanding. Writing is for the purpose of grasping reality itself, which is always something other than the social understanding.

Do you consider yourself a political writer?

All writing is political in the sense of attempting to correct these false social understandings. At times its purpose is to merely reveal with a new freshness, a perceptual freshness, as it were. But even this itself has a certain basic political significance, in the sense that awakened human beings will act and think differently than those who are at rest in the normal tranquilized non-perception that we usually are caught up in.

Does living outside the United States help or hinder your writing?

I think it helps, in general. It is in some ways a very undeveloped culture, yet in other ways it is overbearing. (The US, that is.) There is, for example, a great deal of rather stifling political correctness, as it's called, and to get away from that is itself a positive thing. For a while I had no idea how I would ever get all this material published, especially if you're not there trying to do all the "networking" that is needed, and which I was absolutely terrible at anyway -- worse than terrible, I really had no clue, I still don't, I suppose. And then it came about that you could just do it all by yourself, by means of the internet.

How much material is it? It's quite a lot, it would seem.

Yes, I guess it's about 40 volumes or so. Over 2,000 pages, if you want to measure it like that. I don't know how much it would weigh.

There seem to be many styles represented. Was that something you consciously strove for?

Yes. I always wanted to be able to represent a wide variety of experiences. My first models for the artist were people such as Picasso, Goethe, Bach -- artists who could work in a very wide range of forms and even use widely different styles. Of course, I can't compare myself to people like that, but it was still a goal, to try many types of things.

What sorts of things are you working on currently?

Well as you know I am trying to get all this existing work published, going through it, touching it up here and there, proofreading, and so forth. After that, I think I might return to some translating work -- Holderlin especially, and some Chinese poets, but don't ask me which ones.

All right. But what were you trying to do in these poems in particular?

This sequence came partly from being exposed to the poetry of John Wieners, about whose work I wrote a small book some years later.

About the Author

Steven Frattali is an expatriate American writer living in Taipei. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry, totaling over 2,000 pages of work. He is also the author of several critical works, among them *Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost* and *Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism*.

About the Banyan Press of Taipei

The Banyan Press of Taipei was founded in 2008 by Samuel Palmer and Steven Frattali. It plans to publish the work of expatriate Anglophone writers of the Pacific Rim who are working outside the norms of mainstream publishing. The Press does not at this time invite submissions, but it hopes to do so in the future.